

In response to new hardship data, Members of Congress, Community Leaders Call for Adequate Funding of Food Stamp Program

WASHINGTON, DC (February 28, 2012) – Today, Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), other members of Congress, food experts, religious leaders and current Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients stood in support of the growing number of Americans who need temporary assistance, called for adequate funding during upcoming budget consideration and denounced unfair, inaccurate attacks against the food assistance program.

Yesterday, Schakowsky and 32 co-sponsors introduced H. Res 564 in the House recognizing the critical role SNAP plays to prevent chronic hunger and give American families the chance they need to thrive in this country.

Almost 50 million Americans – and one in four American children – are food insecure, meaning they sometimes don't have enough to eat. Yesterday, new food hardship data from the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) showed nearly one in five Americans said there were times they didn't have enough money to buy food that they or their families needed in 2011. SNAP, formerly called food stamps, is short-term food assistance to prevent malnutrition among American families that are often underpaid and underemployed as well as seniors who often have to choose between food and medicine.

"In the wealthiest nation on earth, the number of working American families that go hungry is unconscionable," said **Rep. Jan Schakowsky**. "The assistance SNAP provides can make all the difference in the world to a family trying to buy enough groceries for the month. Our recent economic turbulence has rattled all sectors of our economy and every socioeconomic group. It is in our economic best interest to maintain strong SNAP funding and I am shocked by the contempt Republicans have directed at many struggling Americans."



Studies show that in 2010, SNAP kept more than 4 million Americans out of poverty while not contributing to the nation's long-term fiscal problems. SNAP participants include all ethnic, demographic, religious, or cultural groups affected by prolonged economic struggles including the elderly, the disabled, children, low-wage workers, the unemployed, students, soldiers and military families, white, black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native Americans. The average beneficiary is on the program for less than a year. Speakers in support of the SNAP program included Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA); Rep. Marcia Fudge (D-OH); Peter Larkin, President, National Grocers Association; Bishop Thomas Hoyt, former President of the National Council of Churches; Rabbi Michael Namath from the Religious Action Center; Jim Weill, President of the Food Research Action Center (FRAC); Josh Protas, Washington Director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs; and two former SNAP recipients.

Rep. Jim McGovern: "Hunger is a political condition – we have the resources to end it, but we lack the political will to make it happen. I know it's fashionable among Republicans to demonize the poor, but the fact is that SNAP is one of the most effective programs we have. Jan Schakowsky is absolutely right – we need to stop playing defense on this issue and start playing some offense to educate our colleagues and the American people about the reality of hunger in America ."

Rep. Marcia Fudge: "Hunger is real in this country. I urge my colleagues to visit a local food pantry or meal site and listen to the stories of people who utilize SNAP and feeding programs. If they did, it would be easy to understand the importance of this program. It has allowed millions of struggling Americans to put food on the table. Feeding America recently reported that 46 percent of households served by its agencies must choose between paying for utilities and paying for food. Thirty-nine percent of households said they must choose between paying their mortgage or rent and paying for food. It's time people stop demonizing SNAP and start working on eliminating hunger."

"Republicans like to argue that the costs and number of people benefiting from Food Stamps have increased in recent years. Unemployment has surged and millions of Americans turned to food stamps—and as it is intended to do, the program has worked. Over 46 million people in this country, including 21 million kids, have access to the food they need to thrive because of the food stamp program. And these funds are reinvested into the economy, providing an immediate and important impact on economic growth and job creation," said **Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT)**. "

Food stamps help families make ends meet, and as the economy improves and families get back on their feet, the costs of food stamps will decrease again. This is the entire essence of a social safety net."

Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA): "Grocery shopping with food stamps is not choosing between the sushi grade tuna steaks or grade A New York strip; it's picking out the can of chunk light packed in water or the package of grade D ground chuck to feed a family struggling to make ends meet. If we're being honest about the millions of Americans who are hurting in our economy and just trying to put food on the table, then there is no question, funding for SNAP needs to be preserved."

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